

CHURCHES CALL FOR PRAYER AND FASTING TO HEAL BACKSLIDING

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In the mid-17th century, the Baptist churches of Ireland agreed together to meet on the first Wednesday of each month to fast and pray for spiritual revival. On June 1, 1653, they sent the following letter to the Baptist churches of England, listing the sins that they acknowledged before God. It must be remembered that these churches, by today's standards, were very zealous for the things of Christ and very separated from the world. They had a great zeal for church discipline. Many of the saints in these congregations had been bitterly persecuted for Jesus' sake. Yet they confessed before God their backslidden condition. We would do well to follow their example in these times of increased apostasy and moral depravity:

The churches of Christ in Ireland, walking in the faith and order of the gospel, do agree together, through divine assistance, to set apart the first fourth day, called Wednesday, in every month, solemnly to seek the face of our God; and by fasting and prayer humbly to mourn before him for the things following; which is also recommended to our dear friends in England, and scattered brethren in several places, who have obtained like precious faith with us.

1. Our little knowledge of, and less trusting in the name of our God in Christ, so as to set him for ever before our eyes, that we may glorify him both in our bodies and souls, which are his, 1 Cor. 6:20; Heb. 5:12.
2. Our little sincere love to the Lord and his people, and our little knowledge of the office and proper place of each member, as God hath set him in the body of Christ; to the end that every particular member may be now effectually improved, for the mutual edification of the whole, 1 Cor. 12:19,20,21, &c. Eph. 4:16.
3. Our little serious searching into the word of God, and not substantially acquainting ourselves with the foundation truths revealed therein, 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:2; Rom. 1:16,17.
4. Our little faith in the great and precious promises of the Lord, which are to be fulfilled in the last days, Luke 18:8; 2 Pet. 1:4.

5. Our little pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus: and our inordinate affections after earthly things, Luke 10:40,41; Phil. 3:14; Col. 3:1,2.

6. Our little praying and praising frame of heart; in particular, for faithful labourers in the Lord's vineyard: and for all whom he hath put in authority over us, under whom we have had much opportunity to practise the truth we profess, Mat. 9:37,38; John 15:4; Psalm 22:3; 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Tim. 2:2; 1 Pet. 2:14; Isaiah 9:7.

7. Our little concern for the sufferings of the people of God, Luke 18:7; Rev. 17:6.

8. Our great aptness to forget the things God hath done for us, and to abuse the many precious mercies God hath multiplied upon us.

9. Our little laying to heart the great breaches the Lord hath made among us, by removing many righteous ones from us.

10. Our want of spiritual wisdom to reprove sin plainly in all without respect of persons, and to exhort faithfully, so as to stop the mouths of gainsayers, and give no just offence to any.

11. Our little mourning for sin, both in ourselves and in others, Ezek. 9:4; Hos. 4:12.

12. Our great ignorance of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, Jeremiah 17:9,10.

These things, among many others, ought to be sufficient grounds of our lying low before the Lord, that he may lift us up in due time, and supply all our wants according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus, James 4:3,9,10; Phil. 4:19. [Thomas's Hist. of Welch Association, cited by Joseph Ivimey, A History of the English Baptists, 1811, vol. I, pp. 248-250]

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